

LESSON 55

Paul's Work in Ephesus

ACTS 19:1-10; 20:17-24



BIBLE TRUTH

THE MESSAGE OF THE GOSPEL MUST BE PROCLAIMED AND PRESERVED

LESSON SNAPSHOT

1. OPENING REVIEW 5 MIN

Use last week’s lesson outline to review with the children what they learned.

2. BIBLE STORY 10 MIN

Read Acts 19:1–10; 20:17–24 from the Scriptures or read story 133, “Paul’s Work in Ephesus,” from *The Gospel Story Bible*.

3. OBJECT LESSON 1 15 MIN

Doctrinal Guardian

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ whiteboard and dry-erase marker

4. TEACHING/DISCUSSION

Select one of the object lessons to use to cover the teaching points.

5. OBJECT LESSON 2 15 MIN

Encourage One Another

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ half sheets of white paper
- ✓ colored pencils, pens, or markers

6. SWORD BIBLE MEMORY 5 MIN

7. ACTIVITY TIME 10 MIN

Baptizing the Disciples

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ paper
- ✓ crayons, markers, or colored pencils

8. CLOSING PRAYER 5 MIN

9. BONUS OBJECT LESSON 15 MIN

Find the Errors

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ photocopies of altered Romans 3 passage—one for each student
- ✓ pens or pencils

TOTAL 80 MIN

PREPARING TO TEACH

TEACHING POINTS

Paul corrects wrong doctrine—Apollos was an eloquent speaker who came to Ephesus and taught about Christianity, but who did not know the complete gospel. When Paul reached Ephesus, he met some disciples of Apollos. They had been instructed on the ministry of John the Baptist and the need to turn away from their sins, but they hadn't been taught about the ministry of Jesus and trusting in his work on the cross. They didn't even know about the Holy Spirit. After Paul spoke to them, they believed and were baptized. Paul laid his hands on them and the Holy Spirit came upon them. Although this was only a small group, Paul saw an opportunity to serve them and spent three months in the synagogue laboring to teach them sound doctrine.

Paul trained the local leaders—After three months in Ephesus, teaching in the synagogue and meeting with opposition, Paul turned his attention to the local leaders to train them to minister in the local church. For two years he taught them daily.

It is reasonable to assume that as a result of Paul's work in Ephesus, local churches spread all over Asia. This occurred as a result of Paul's teaching those who came to hear him, and of those who took the gospel message throughout Asia Minor. By the time Paul returned to Ephesus (see Acts 20:17) there were elders and a thriving local church. The work of the apostle, in correcting false and incomplete doctrine, cannot be underestimated.

Paul planted local churches—Once the church in Ephesus was strengthened by having leaders who had an accurate understanding of the gospel, it was time for Paul to move on to continue his apostolic work. A quick survey of Paul's life reveals an amazing apostolic mission. The advance of the gospel to the Gentiles in his generation can be attributed largely to this one man's Spirit-empowered ministry. Paul's journeys through the Mediterranean area saw churches planted in Ephesus, Philippi, Thessalonica, and Corinth. From these key cities the message spread throughout the nations of that area.

A LITTLE BIT MORE***Apollos***

Apollos was a Jew from Alexandria who was familiar with the teachings of the early Christians and the baptism of John the Baptist. He did not, however, fully understand the gospel. Two of Paul's fellow workers, Priscilla and Aquila, after hearing Apollos speak, took him aside to complete his understanding (Acts 18:24–26). Apollos was an eloquent speaker and had great positive influence among the Corinthians (see 1 Corinthians 1:12). Paul considered Apollos a fellow worker, an apostle like himself (1 Corinthians 3:6–10). Paul urged him to go to the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 16:12). Apollos is also spoken of favorably in Titus 3:13. Apollos seems to have had an apostolic call as we see him serving with the team who cared for the local churches under Paul.

Where Is the Gospel? _____

How does today's Bible story fit into God's greater plan of redemption?

God used Paul to bring an accurate gospel message to the Ephesians. As a result, the work that began with a small group of disciples, grew into a thriving church. Paul left after working with the Ephesians for three years. After some time, Paul returned and paid a visit to Ephesus. He gathered the Ephesian elders

(Acts 20:17) and reflected back on the time he had spent teaching them. He said, "I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable...testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of repentance toward God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 20:20–21).

When Paul first arrived, the twelve disciples of Apollos seemed to be acquainted only with the first half of the gospel, repentance toward God. Paul corrected them by giving them the complete gospel message, teaching them to place their faith in Jesus Christ. It is good to repent of sins against God, but apart from placing faith in Jesus and what he did on the cross there is no salvation. Acts 4:12 says, "And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." The result of bringing the gospel to the Ephesians was that many repented and were healed, delivered, and converted.

THE LESSON

OPENING REVIEW 5 MIN

Use last week’s lesson outline to review with the children what they learned.

BIBLE STORY 10 MIN

Read Acts 19:1–10; 20:17–24 from the Scriptures or read story 133, “Paul’s Work in Ephesus,” from *The Gospel Story Bible*.

OBJECT LESSON 1 15 MIN

Doctrinal Guardian

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ whiteboard and dry-erase marker

The point of this object lesson is to help the children see how important Paul’s work as an apostle was to the early church.

It is easy to fall into doctrinal error. Just a few words changed in our theology make a complete difference. God used the apostle Paul, along with the other apostles, to keep the message of the gospel free from error. The following quotes from the Bible have been distorted to create some obvious error. Write them on the whiteboard and then discuss them with the class. See if the children can play the role of doctrinal guardian and let you know what is wrong with the Scripture. Use this at the end of your teaching segment to show the children what it was like for Paul to correct a poor understanding of the gospel.

- For God so loved the world, that he gave it the sun, that whoever bathes in it should not perish but live within its warmth.
(correct verse John 3:16)
- Mankind is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.
(correct verse Psalm 103:8)

- Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by labor and effort let your troubles be overcome by your hard work.
(correct verse Philippians 4:6)
- For by grace you have been saved through works. And this is your own doing; it is a gift to God, along with your works, so that is your boast.
(correct verse Ephesians 2:8–9)

TEACHING/DISCUSSION

Select one of the object lessons to use to cover the teaching points.

OBJECT LESSON 2 15 MIN

Encourage One Another

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ half sheets of white paper
- ✓ colored pencils, pens, or markers

Have the children write notes of encouragement to those who have been guiding them in sound doctrine and truth—fathers, mothers, pastors, friends, or teachers. The important thing is to express gratitude and encouragement to those who seek to keep doctrine pure.

The note can be as simple as this: Thank you for watching over my life and teaching me about God’s Word.

SWORD BIBLE MEMORY 5 MIN

Take time during the class to review the SWORD Bible Memory verses with the class. Provide the opportunity for each child to recite the verses to an adult worker.

ACTIVITY TIME 10 MIN

Baptizing the Disciples

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ paper
- ✓ crayons, markers, or colored pencils

Draw a picture of Paul baptizing the disciples at Ephesus.

CLOSING PRAYER 5 MIN

Pick several children to pray prayers based on the day's Scripture passages.

BONUS OBJECT LESSON 15 MIN

Find the Errors

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ photocopies of altered Romans 3 passage—one for each student
- ✓ pens or pencils

Use the following excerpt from the book of Romans 3 to help the students do the work of an apostle. They are to compare the altered passage with the original to discover the errors in the passage. Make photocopies of the altered passage of Romans for each person in the class (see below). Have each student work independently or divide into teams. Have them circle anything they think represents an alteration to the original Bible text. When they are finished, talk as a class about why even a small alteration changes what we believe. Talk about how trusting in our works rather than faith is a false doctrine that Paul would have spoken against. All the alterations to the passage in Romans place the requirement for reconciliation with God on our works not faith. That is probably the greatest error in the church historically and the quickest way to undermine the true gospel.

Undistorted Romans 3:21–30:

But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

Then what becomes of our boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? By a law of works? No, but by the law of faith. For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law. Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also, since God is one—who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith.

Distorted Romans 3:21–30:

But now a righteousness from works has been manifested apart from grace, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—the good works we perform lead to faith in Jesus Christ for all who do them. For there is no distinction: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by what they do by the example that came by Christ Jesus. God put forward as a propitiation, by his blood, to be received by works. This was to show God’s righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who follows the example of Jesus.

Then what becomes of our boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? By grace? No, but on the works of the law. For we hold that one is justified by following Christ along with observing the law. Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also, since God is one—who will justify the circumcised by works and the uncircumcised by works.

Questions to follow exercise:

- **Why is it false doctrine to change the requirement of salvation from faith to works?**

(The whole basis of Christianity is that God is holy and we are sinners. Once we sin we can never make ourselves perfect again. If God were to justify sinners on the basis of their own efforts, he would cease to be holy. Since holiness is a foundational part of his character, he would cease to be God.)

- **Why is a works-based salvation appealing to sinful man?**

(If our salvation is based on our works, we don’t need God to be saved; we can save ourselves by our efforts. A works-based salvation tears down God and exalts man to the point where he becomes divine.)